

# Fast As You Can: US Lagging Behind in Broadband Internet Access

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At a time when technology has been able to facilitate advancement in so many other areas, the United States is coming up surprisingly short when it comes to meeting its citizens' Internet speed needs.

According to a new report from Akamai, the US has seen improvement in broadband speed from year to year. But even though the broadband speed in the US recently jumped 31 percent in its national average connection rate, the country is a laggard behind other global leaders, according to Akamai's 2014 report "The State of the Internet."

Topping Akamai's list of countries with robust broadband are:

1. South Korea
2. Japan
3. Hong Kong
4. Switzerland
5. Netherlands
6. Latvia
7. Sweden
8. Czech Republic
9. Finland
10. Ireland

Globally, the US came in 12th place in broadband access and speed, with an average connection speed of 10.5 megabits per second (Mbps). To compare, South Korea's rate leaped by 145 percent to 23.6 Mbps. This is alarming to health IT stakeholders that rely on high broadband speeds to facilitate health information exchange (HIE) and other health initiatives, such as the "meaningful use" EHR Incentive Program.

Harry Rhodes, MBA, RHIA, CHPS, CDIP, CPHIMS, FAHIMA, a director of HIM practice excellence at AHIMA, says a Health Level Seven (HL7) workgroup is working to tackle "the slow speeds and lack of strong broadband service outside of urban areas." He adds that the workgroups "are looking into how to adjust message and file sizes and formats to speed up performance without causing care coordination and data accuracy and integrity to suffer."

Poor access to high-speed broadband puts rural healthcare providers and patients at a disadvantage when it comes to providing and obtaining much needed telehealth services.

## Article citation:

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